



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## Biblical Notes.

---

**The Geography of Palestine.** Rev. Geo. Adam Smith begins in the *Expositor* for February what promises to be a series of articles not only valuable, but what seldom is found, also interesting, on the "Historical Geography of the Holy Land." He remarks that what is wanted by the student of the Bible is not the common and easy task of taking one's readers along the track of one's own journey and labelling every scene, adventure or social custom with a text or story from Scripture. Rather he needs some idea of the main outlines of Palestine, its shape and disposition, plains, passes and mountains, etc., especially also to discern between the contribution of physical nature and the product of purely moral and spiritual forces in the religious development. Mr. Smith lays out the general features of Palestine in five parallel zones, imagining the observer in a ship off the coast. These zones are (1) The Coast and Maritime Plain; (2) The Shephelah or Low Hills; (3) The Central Range; (4) The Jordan Valley; (5) The Land East of Jordan. In addition to these, cutting right athwart them all, is the sixth feature of the land, the wide Plain of Esdraelon, or Megiddo. It would be well for the Bible student to bear this geographical division of the Holy Land in mind.

**The Hebrews and the Sea.** Mr. Smith has, in this first article on the "Coast and Maritime Plain of the Holy Land," some very striking remarks on the above topic. He calls attention to the fact that, from the mouth of the Nile to the high headland of Carmel, this coast is absolutely devoid of promontory or recess. No invader has ever disembarked an army on it till the country behind it was already in his power. A long line of foaming breakers meets the eye everywhere. How these geographical facts find their echo in the Old Testament history and literature! Throughout the Old Testament the sea spreads before us for spectacle, for symbol, for music, but never for use, save in one instance, that of Jonah. It was said, "Ye shall have the Great Sea for a barrier." Dan, at first, "remaining in ships" speedily retreated inland. Asher and Zebulun lie north of Carmel; and the word translated "haven" in connection with them means "beach." How different in this respect was Palestine from Greece. Their broken coast line invited the Greeks to roam. But from the high inland station the Hebrew saw his coast very different—a stiff, stormy line, down the whole length of which, as there was nothing to tempt men in, so there was nothing to tempt them out. Yet, Mr. Smith again adds, in the development of Israel's consciousness, she broke through her barriers and her eyes were lifted beyond that iron coast and she saw, through the prophet's eyes, the isles bring their riches from afar, the ships of Tarshish in the van. It was only when Cæsarea was established that that coast was broken through, and this port played a large part in the early progress of Christianity.

**The Parable of the Talents.** Two popular misconceptions obtain concerning the teaching of this parable, to which attention is called by the *Expository*

*Times*. First, the word talent (which is derived directly from this parable) is commonly used as signifying one's natural ability or capacity, and people speak of "a *talented* man." But it will be observed in the parable itself that the talents are distributed according to the "several ability" of each, and it is on the basis of this ability that the opportunities (talents) are given. The second erroneous interpretation is regarding the usury mentioned in the parable. This was pointed out by Mr. Ruskin in an argument against usury, in which he says that the strongest passage in the New Testament in denunciation of that sin is in the Parable of the Talents, but by a curious misreading it has been repeatedly quoted in its favor. Instead, the very conception of God as "an hard man" shows the text clearly to mean: You call me an hard man; if I had been so I would not have scrupled to take usury, that simplest way of gathering where I had not strewn; so you are without excuse. That is, the intention is not to commend usury here, any more than in the similar parable does Christ represent himself as the unjust judge, who feared not God nor regarded man.

**"Born from Above," John 3:3.** There are distinguished advocates, says a current writer, for both of the rival translations of the Greek word *anōthen*, and the two meanings—"anew" and "from above"—are so different that a choice between them must be made. The determining factor must be the relation of this verse to the immediate context. Jesus was informing Nicodemus that the Kingdom of God was not the peculiar heritage of the Jews, but a blessing for man as man, and before any one could enjoy it he must pass through an experience likened to a birth—"Except a man be born *anōthen*, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." Nicodemus interprets this statement as referring to a second physical birth, but he plainly errs in doing so, for vs. 5 interprets Christ's thought by saying, "Except a man be born of water and spirit," etc. Further, Jesus was insisting not merely upon the necessity of a new beginning of life, but also upon the beginning of a new life. Hence his use of the distinctive word *anōthen*, which describes the source or character of this new life. The Kingdom is God's, and only life descending from above, from Him, not life descending from Abraham, makes a man its subject. Compare Jno. 1:13, "born of God." And this is the usage of *anōthen* throughout the Gospel.

**The Date of the Decalogue.** In reply to the radical criticism of the Ten Commandments and the manner in which they are generally supposed to have been given, Dr. T. W. Chambers says: We distinctly maintain that the code from Sinai was a revelation from heaven. It was in no respect dependent upon the character or condition of those to whom it was first given. It set forth the religious and moral duties that belong to man as man in any age or land. In its completeness and purity it is as much above the average moral insight of 800 B. C. as 1500 B. C. It is not at all the result of men's reflections on moral obligation, its intrinsic character testifies to its origin as a God-given code. Its promulgation was reserved until the chosen seed had developed into a nation ready to maintain an independent position upon its own soil. A rich, varied and significant ritual was provided for Israel, but accompanying it was an ethical system, exalted far above all rites and ceremonies by the manner in which it was recorded and then proclaimed to the people.